THE CONSEQUENCES OF ATTACKING IRAN by Alexander Baron

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Seven years ago today, four co-ordinated groups of anti-Western fanatics flying under the false flag of Islam hijacked four aircraft on the Continental United States and perpetrated the greatest single act of mass murder in the modern age outside of war-time or organised state sponsored atrocity.

Every person over a certain age who was alive on that day has his or her own recollection of where they were and what they were doing when it happened. I was on a train home – having left the Library fairly early – and glanced at a report in a fellow commuter's evening paper. When I watched the late evening news, I saw the full horror of what had happened.

I didn't know anyone personally who was killed in the Twin Towers, Flight 93, or the attack on The Pentagon, but in the 21st Century Global Village it was not too surprising that I knew a few people who had, mostly virtual friends but at least one personal acquaintance.

The reaction of America and the world was initially muted. We were all too shocked at both the audacity but most of all the scale of the outrage. Then, inevitably, came anger. While the actual murderers had all perished, they would unquestionably have needed at least minimal assistance, including of course funding, though the cost of mounting the entire operation has been reliably estimated by Jason Burke as half a million dollars, the price of two or three modest properties in some areas of London.

So what did our leaders decide to do to deter and prevent any such future atrocities, in their infinite wisdom? The answer is of course The War On Terror, but waging war against largely unidentified fanatics who may strike anywhere and at any time is a far different proposition from fighting a regular war. It is a different proposition even from taking on terrorists in a situation such as existed until recently in Northern Ireland, though that is difficult enough.

Apart from beefing up restrictions and security precautions on air travel worldwide – an unfortunate but necessary measure – and increasing the power of the state to monitor and to some extent control its citizens, the powers-that-be decided to invade Afghanistan, and in due course Iraq.

Although there was no credible evidence that the then masters of Afghanistan, the Taliban, had participated directly in 9/11, there was a strong possibility that a man who has praised it if not funded or helped to fund it, was hiding out there. Even though the story of Bin Laden's secret fortress turned out to be a total fantasy, the involvement of the

Taliban in fomenting terrorist ideology and in training terrorists was real enough. The invasion of Afghanistan was both justified and to some extent necessary. Iraq though was a different matter.

The West had already initiated two wars against Iraq in the 90s, the first with some justification when Saddam Hussein overstepped the mark and invaded neighbouring Kuwait, although the response was out of all proportion to the Iraqi invasion, and inflicted unimaginable suffering on the Iraqi people. The second had less justification, as did the sanctions against that country, in spite of Saddam's continued belligerence.

But the invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussein went far beyond the first two actions. We in the West were fed a stream of lies about weapons of mass destruction, and of Iraq's non-existent involvement with the 9/11 plotters. It is difficult to give any credit at all to our leaders – the ones who matter – sincerely believing any of these claims; what they wanted, what the American Administration wanted, was revenge for 9/11, not on the perpetrators who had died with their evil deeds, and are hopefully burning in Everlasting Hell, but on the neighbourhood bully, or on anyone at all for that matter.

With the invasion of Iraq, I couldn't help thinking about a low budget horror film I had seen sometime before. Called *Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer, Part II*, it was based very loosely on Henry Lee Lucas, an American drifter who confessed to literally hundreds of murders, though a thorough investigation by the Attorney General cast doubt on even those eleven of which he was convicted.

In the film, Henry's friend is attacked and beaten up in a neighbourhood dispute. His friend rants and raves about how he will exact revenge, but Henry tells him he hasn't got the bottle, then suggests they exact revenge right there and then. So what do they do? They walk into a garage where a mechanic is working on a car, a man who has done neither of them any harm, and whom they have never seen before. And murder him. True, Saddam Hussein was no innocent mechanic, and he was a lot worse than the neighbourhood bully, but can the same be said for all the innocent Iraqis who were likewise murdered by our forces of *liberation*?

I use the word murdered consciously; war may be legitimised murder, but it is still murder, even if the innocents who die in it are *collateral damage*, to use a contemporary phrase. In June of this year, the total death toll for the New York attacks was estimated precisely at 2751; the previous March, the death toll of Americans in Iraq topped four thousand. The Iraqi death toll we can but imagine. Is the world a safer place for this?

No sooner had Saddam Hussein been removed from power than the Bush Administration in particular was looking around for another neighbourhood bully to attack; they decided on Iran. By and large, Iran is a country that has minded its own business since its own regional disputes with Iraq. It is a country that has no Imperialist ambitions; if there are human rights and civil liberties abuses in Iran, they are equalled if not exceeded by those practised in the West.

In Britain and the rest of the so-called Free World there was outrage over the attack on "free speech" by Islamic Fundamentalists in the wake of the publication of a handful of blasphemous cartoons. As I write these words, two British citizens are languishing in a Californian gaol having fled this country where they were tried for and convicted of publishing politically incorrect cartoons. There are also still men languishing in an American military prison complex having been detained for years – literally years – without charge or trial. What was that about freedom of expression? And whatever happened to *habeas corpus*?

Two years ago, an attack on Iran looked likely, even inevitable. Wiser counsels appeared to have prevailed, at least for a while, but now the hawks are back. The pretext is the same as before, Iran is seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, and must be stopped at any cost.

It is a fact that Iran has a nuclear programme, a programme it says is for peaceful use. The current writer is opposed unconditionally to nuclear power, but we live in the real world, and if a sovereign nation decides it wants nuclear power, or nuclear weapons for that matter, who are we to say it can't have either or both? Britain has both nuclear power and a nuclear deterrent; the United States not only has both, it is also the only nation that has ever used nuclear weapons in anger.

In July of this year, Israeli historian Benny Morris predicted an attack on Iran by Israel; his *New York Times* article was called *Using Bombs To Stave Off War*. Where have we heard that before?

It is ironic that in Britain, a man who racially abuses an Arab in the street can be dragged into court and fined, or even in some circumstances sent to gaol. Yet the same people who profess horror and righteous indignation at any manifestation of *racism* will quite willingly murder innocent foreigners in their own countries for no better reason than to "stave off war", what the Revisionist Historian Harry Elmer Barnes would have called perpetual wars for perpetual peace.

What will happen if Iran is attacked, by Israel, or by the United States? The Arab world and the Islamic world in particular have had enough of the sickening hypocrisy of especially the United States and the United Kingdom in all matters related to the Middle East, and Islam. An attack on the sovereign nation of Iran, any attack, will have serious consequences for all of us. There will without doubt be increased terror attacks against innocent civilians in the great cities of the West; these attacks may target specific individuals or groups – Jews perhaps – but they will be largely indiscriminate, as were the 7/7 attacks on London in which people from all backgrounds were slaughtered. The only thing the victims of future attacks will have in common will be their vulnerability.

Such attacks will largely be the work of lone fanatics or small groups of them. Because Al-Qaeda does not exist, at least not in the way it is portrayed in the mass media, there is no prospect of cutting off its head. Even cutting off funding is a futile exercise; the London attacks were carried out on a shoestring budget. For such men, mass murder, like human

life, is cheap. And this is only the cancer in our midst. Westerners travelling abroad will be subjected to outrages – the Bali bombing comes to mind – there will be increased hatred and bitterness between all sections of society the world over. Attacks on innocent civilians will provoke further and more repressive laws and violations of civil liberties, of especially but not only Moslems in all Western nations. But what will happen in the Gulf?

The Second World War began when Britain and France over-reacted to Hitler's territorial ambitions; the First World War was triggered by a single murder, the assassination of Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand (whose wife was also killed in the attack); this assassination set off a chain of events which soon engulfed Europe and much of the rest of the world in what was then the bloodiest conflict in history. That was at a time when nuclear weapons and even aerial bombardment (in any meaningful sense) were not an issue.

An attack on Iran in the near future and especially at the current time has all the ingredients of triggering another if not global then certainly massive regional conflict. If Syria and other Islamic countries are dragged into such a conflict, and if "non-conventional" weapons are used, we could be looking at a seven figure death toll, a crisis in the world economy and local environmental despoilation on a frightening scale. And for what? Our refusal to allow an independent Islamic Republic to develop the same programmes we in the West take for granted? The likelihood of other countries in the region becoming embroiled in such a conflict has increased considerably since the 1990s, especially as most of them tend to interpret all Western militarism in the Gulf in terms of Zionist manipulation or the relentless pursuit of oil.

We must not allow this madness to happen; a change of administration in Washington will lessen although not eliminate entirely such a possibility. As recently as April this year, Hillary Clinton expressed her willingness to "obliterate Iran", although she prefixed this comment with a big if. And if Barack Obama defeats John McCain in the forthcoming election, she will be but a heartbeat away from the Presidency.

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